

# Doug Burgum

**Douglas James Burgum** (born August 1, 1956) is an American entrepreneur, philanthropist, and politician serving as the 33rd governor of North Dakota since December 15, 2016. He is a member of the Republican Party.<sup>[1]</sup>

Burgum joined Great Plains Software in 1983 and became its president in 1984. He sold the company to Microsoft for \$1.1 billion in 2001. At Microsoft, he became the head of Microsoft Business Solutions. He began serving as chairman of the board for Atlassian in 2012. He also served on the board for SuccessFactors starting in 2007, and as chairman from 2010 to 2012. Burgum is the founder of Kilbourne Group, a Fargo-based real-estate development firm, and a co-founder of Arthur Ventures.

In 2016 Burgum announced his intention to run for governor of North Dakota as a Republican. With no formal political experience and despite losing the state Republican party's endorsement to longtime Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem at the party convention in April, Burgum defeated Stenehjem in the primary election to claim the Republican nomination. He faced Democrat Marvin Nelson and Libertarian Marty Riske in the November general election, and won with over 75% of the vote.<sup>[2]</sup>

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### Doug Burgum



#### 33rd Governor of North Dakota

##### Incumbent

##### Assumed office

December 15, 2016

**Lieutenant** Brent Sanford

**Preceded by** Jack Dalrymple

##### Personal details

**Born** August 1, 1956  
Arthur, North Dakota, U.S.

**Political party** Republican

**Spouse(s)** Karen Stoker  
(m. 1991; div. 2003)  
Kathryn Helgaas (m. 2016)

**Children** 3

**Residence** Governor's Residence

**Education** North Dakota State University  
(BA)  
Stanford University (MBA)

**Website** Government website (http://governor.nd.gov/govern

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## Early life and education

Burgum was born on August 1, 1956, and raised in [Arthur, North Dakota](#), where his grandfather founded a grain elevator in 1906.<sup>[3]</sup> He attended [North Dakota State University](#) to earn his undergraduate degree in 1978. During his senior year at NDSU, he applied to the Stanford University Graduate School of Business. He also started a chimney-sweeping business. “The newspaper wrote a story about me as a chimney sweep,” he later recalled, “and ran a photo of me sitting on top of an icy chimney in below-freezing weather in Fargo. The story made the AP wire service. I was later told it caused quite a stir in the Stanford admissions office: 'Hey, there's a chimney sweep from North Dakota who's applied.'”<sup>[4]</sup>

He was accepted to study business at Stanford. While there, he befriended [Steve Ballmer](#), who would later be CEO of Microsoft. During his last year at Stanford, Burgum “spent the whole final quarter on a project team with Ballmer.”<sup>[4]</sup> He received his MBA from [Stanford University Graduate School of Business](#) in 1980. He later received honorary doctorates from [North Dakota State](#)<sup>[5]</sup> in 2000 and from the [University of Mary](#) in 2006.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Executive career

### Early career

Following his graduation from Stanford GSB, Burgum moved to Chicago to become a consultant with [McKinsey & Company](#). Soon afterward he mortgaged \$250,000 of farmland to provide the seed capital for accounting software company [Great Plains Software](#) in [Fargo, North Dakota](#).<sup>[3]</sup> He joined the company in 1983 and became its president in 1984 after leading a small investment group composed of family members in buying out the rest of the company.

### Great Plains Software

During the 1980s, *Fortune* magazine often ranked Great Plains among the top 100 companies to work for in the US. Burgum grew the company to about 250 employees by 1989 and led the company to about \$300 million in annual sales and a 1997 IPO, after using the Internet to help it expand beyond North Dakota.<sup>[7]</sup> In 2001 he sold Great Plains Software to Microsoft for \$1.1 billion.<sup>[8]</sup> Burgum has said he built the company in Fargo because of its proximity to North Dakota State University, in order to employ its stream of engineering students.<sup>[9]</sup>

### Microsoft

After the sale, Burgum was named Senior Vice President of Microsoft Business Solutions Group,<sup>[6][10]</sup> the offshoot created from merging Great Plains into the corporation.<sup>[5]</sup> He stayed with Microsoft until 2007 and was responsible for making enterprise apps a priority for Microsoft during this tenure.<sup>[11]</sup>

Satya Nadella, current CEO of Microsoft, has credited Burgum with “inspiring him to find the soul of Microsoft”.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Board work

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Burgum has served on the advisory board for Stanford Graduate School of Business<sup>[6]</sup> and was on the board of SuccessFactors during the 2000s, becoming its chairman from 2007 till the 2011 sale of the company to SAP. In 2012 he became the first chairman of the board for Atlassian, after it expanded from its initial board of three members (none of whom served as the official chair).<sup>[13]</sup> During 2011 and 2014, he twice spent several months as the interim CEO of Intelligent InSites,<sup>[6]</sup> a company for which he has served as the executive chairman of the board since 2008.<sup>[14]</sup> That year he also became a member of Avalara's board of directors.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Investment firms

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Burgum is the founder of the Kilbourne Group, a real-estate development firm focused on downtown Fargo.<sup>[16][17]</sup> In 2013 he created plans to build the tallest building in Fargo—a 23-story mixed-use building—to be named either Block 9 or Dakota Place.<sup>[18]</sup> The company has also advocated for a convention center to be built in downtown Fargo.<sup>[19]</sup> It has acquired and renovated many Fargo properties, including the former St. Mark's Lutheran Church and the former Woodrow Wilson alternative high school.<sup>[20]</sup> Burgum co-founded Arthur Ventures, a venture capital company.<sup>[14]</sup> Several of the companies he has invested in are in Fargo.<sup>[8][21]</sup>

## Philanthropy

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Burgum supports philanthropic causes like the Plains Art Museum.<sup>[22]</sup> In 2001<sup>[23]</sup> he donated a refurbished school building he had acquired in 2000 to North Dakota State University. It was named Renaissance Hall and became home to the university's visual arts department, major components of the architecture and landscape architecture department and the Tri-College University office.<sup>[24]</sup> In 2008 Burgum started the Doug Burgum Family Fund, which focuses its charitable giving on youth, education and health.<sup>[6]</sup>

## Governor of North Dakota

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### 2016

In 2016, Burgum announced his intent to run for governor of North Dakota as a Republican. With no formal political experience, Burgum lost the state Republican party's gubernatorial endorsement contest to longtime Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem at the party convention in April. Nevertheless, he defeated Stenehjem handily in the primary election two months later to claim the nomination. Burgum faced Democrat Marvin Nelson and Libertarian Marty Riske in the November general election and won with over 75% of the vote.<sup>[2]</sup>

### 2020

## Tenure

Burgum was sworn in as the 33rd governor of North Dakota on December 15, 2016, alongside running mate Brent Sanford, the 38th lieutenant governor of North Dakota.<sup>[26][27]</sup>

## Political positions

Burgum supports the proposed Dakota Access Pipeline.<sup>[28]</sup>

In July 2020, Burgum called the 2020 Republican platform "divisive and divisional" on LGBT issues.<sup>[29][30]</sup>

## Personal life

Burgum married his first wife, Karen Stoker, in 1991. They have three children and divorced in 2003. In 2016, Burgum married Kathryn Helgaas.<sup>[31]</sup>

## Electoral history

2016 North Dakota gubernatorial election <sup>[32]</sup>				
Party		Candidate	Votes	%
	<u>Republican</u>	<b>Doug Burgum and Brent Sanford</b>	<b>259,863</b>	<b>76.52</b>
	<u>Democratic-NPL</u>	Marvin Nelson and Joan Heckaman	65,855	19.39
	<u>Libertarian</u>	Marty Riske and Joshua Voytek	13,230	3.90
	<u>Write-in</u>		653	0.19
Total votes			<b>339,601</b>	<b>100.00</b>

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Karlgaard, Rich; America's Best Entrepreneurial Governor; Forbes; June 13, 2017; [1] (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/richkarlgaard/2017/06/13/americas-best-entrepreneurial-governor/#10e35e037f21>)

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## External links

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- Office of the Governor (<https://www.governor.nd.gov/>) official government site
- Doug Burgum for Governor (<https://dougburgum.com/>) official campaign site
- Doug Burgum ([https://curlie.org/Regional/North\\_America/United\\_States/North\\_Dakota/Government/Executive/Governor\\_Doug\\_Burgum](https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/North_Dakota/Government/Executive/Governor_Doug_Burgum)) at Curlie
- Appearances (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?dougburgum>) on C-SPAN

Party political offices		
Preceded by <b><u>Jack Dalrymple</u></b>	<b><u>Republican nominee for Governor of North Dakota</u></b> 2016, 2020	Most recent
Political offices		
Preceded by <b><u>Jack Dalrymple</u></b>	<b><u>Governor of North Dakota</u></b> 2016–present	Incumbent
U.S. order of precedence (ceremonial)		
Preceded by <b><u>Mike Pence</u></b> <i>as <u>Vice President</u></i>	<b><u>Order of Precedence of the United States</u></b> Within North Dakota	Succeeded by <b><u>Mayor of city</u></b> in which event is held
		Succeeded by <b><u>Otherwise Nancy Pelosi</u></b> <i>as <u>Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives</u></i>
Preceded by <b><u>Jared Polis</u></b> <i>as <u>Governor of Colorado</u></i>	<b><u>Order of Precedence of the United States</u></b> Outside North Dakota	Succeeded by <b><u>Kristi Noem</u></b> <i>as <u>Governor of South Dakota</u></i>

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